

Mains matrix

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1. WORLD TRADE REPORT 2025

Making trade and AI work together to the benefit of all

1. AI as a Trade Multiplier

- AI adoption could raise **global trade in goods & services by ~40% by 2040**, mainly through:

- Lower trade costs
- Higher productivity

2. Global GDP Gains

- If **digital divides are narrowed** and AI spreads across economies:
 - **Global GDP could grow by 12–13%.**

3. AI-Enabled Goods Trade

- Current trade in AI-enabling goods (chips, semiconductors, servers): **USD 2.3 trillion (2023)**
- Expected to expand further with **open trade regimes.**

4. Digital Divide Challenge

- **Low- & middle-income countries** risk being excluded from AI-led gains due to:
 - Poor internet connectivity
 - Weak compute infrastructure

5. Labour Market Impact

- AI may **displace routine cognitive jobs** (translation, transcription).
- But it will **increase demand** for:
 - Data annotation

- AI engineering
- Oversight & regulation roles

6. Regulatory Fragmentation

- **Quantitative restrictions** on AI-related goods rose:
 - **130 (2012) → 500 (2024)**
- WTO warns this could **stifle innovation & raise trade costs.**

7. AI-Trade Synergy

- AI enhances trade efficiency by:
 - Cutting logistics costs
 - Enabling predictive supply chain management
 - Automating customs clearance
- Particularly beneficial for **SMEs.**

8. Inclusivity Imperative

- To prevent widening inequalities, the report stresses:
 - Reskilling & upskilling workforce
 - Social protection measures
 - Open data access

9. WTO's Role

- Encourage broader participation in the **Information Technology Agreement (ITA).**
- Update **GATS commitments** to cover **AI-driven digital services.**

2. Electoral Roll Fraud & Institutional Inaction

A major allegation has been made against the Election Commission of India (ECI) for stalling a critical investigation.

What Happened?

- **Fraud:** In Aland, Karnataka, fraudulent **Form 7** applications were filed to illegally delete nearly 6,000 legitimate voters from the electoral rolls before the 2023 elections.
- **Prevented:** The ECI caught and stopped this deletion in time, so the election result was not affected.
- **Investigation Stalled:** A police (CID) investigation to find the culprits has hit a wall because the **ECI is refusing to share vital technical data** (IP addresses and device details) needed to trace the digital footprint of the fraudsters.

This case is a prime example of:

- **Electoral Malpractice:** How modern technology can be used to manipulate the democratic process.
- **Institutional Accountability:** It raises serious questions about the role and neutrality of independent institutions like the ECI when they are accused of obstructing justice.
- **Transparency vs. Opacity:** The conflict between the need for a transparent investigation and an institution's unwillingness to share operational data.
- **The Bottom Line:** The central controversy is no

longer about the fraud itself (which was prevented), but about the **ECI's refusal to cooperate with investigators**, which prevents identifying the perpetrators and undermines public trust in the electoral system.

3. A Climate-Health Vision with Lessons from India

Context

- **Event:** 2025 Global Conference on Climate and Health (Belém Health Action Plan).
- **Issue:** India was not officially represented, despite being a key player.
- **Relevance:** India's developmental programmes offer lessons for integrating **climate & health goals**.

Insights from India's Welfare Programmes

1. PM POSHAN (Midday Meal Scheme):

- Covers 11 crore children in 11 lakh schools.
- Links health, education, agriculture, and food procurement.
- Addresses malnutrition & builds climate-resilient food systems.

2. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan:

- Tackled sanitation, public health, dignity, and

environmental sustainability.

3. MGNREGA (Environmental Works):

- Restored degraded ecosystems.
- Improved rural livelihoods.

4. PM Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY):

- Provided clean cooking fuel.
- Reduced household air pollution and respiratory disease.

Key Lessons

1. Strong Political Leadership

- PMUY & Swachh Bharat gained momentum from Prime Ministerial support.
- When top leaders prioritize, it becomes a **public good** across departments.

2. Community Engagement

- Swachh Bharat → cultural symbolism (Gandhi's vision).
- PM POSHAN → grassroots support via parents/teachers.
- Climate action needs **high-level framing** linking environment → health outcomes.

3. Procedural Integration

- Embed health impact assessments in environmental decisions.
- Make health considerations

mandatory for big projects.

4. Participatory Implementation

- Mobilize communities (e.g., ASHA workers, panchayats).
- Health framing makes climate issues more relatable (safe water, nutrition, clean air).

Challenges

- Policies often **lack institutional embedding**.
- Risk of climate-health linkages being treated as **symbolic**, not systemic.
- Need for **clear accountability mechanisms** to sustain momentum.

Way Forward

- **Reskill & empower communities:** Frame climate benefits in terms of health.
- **Embed health metrics** in all climate/environment policies.
- **Global governance lesson:** India's experience shows climate policies should be framed as **health policies**, not just emission goals.

Conclusion

- India faces a **choice**:
 - Continue fragmented efforts (risking climate-health crises), OR
 - Build an **integrated governance model** linking climate, health, and development.
- Requires **political leadership + community participation + institutional embedding**.

Here's how to integrate it:

Primary Relevance: GS Paper II (Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice)

This is the strongest fit, focusing on governance models and welfare schemes.

1. Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors:

- **How to use:** The note provides excellent examples of **convergence and integration** in governance.
 - **Case Studies:** Use the listed schemes (PM POSHAN, Swachh Bharat, MGNREGA, PM Ujjwala) not just as standalone successes, but as models of **cross-sectoral integration**. For instance:
 - **PM POSHAN** integrates **Health** (nutrition), **Education** (schools), and **Agriculture** (procurement).
 - **Swachh Bharat** integrates **Health** (sanitation), **Environment** (waste management), and **Social Justice** (dignity).
 - **Governance Lesson:** The key takeaway is the need to move away from working in "silos." This is a powerful point for answers on policy implementation.

2. Important Aspects of Governance:

- **How to use:** The note highlights crucial aspects of good governance:

- **Leadership & Accountability ("Strong Political Leadership"):** The role of top-down leadership in driving mission-mode projects.
- **Citizen Centricity & Participation ("Community Engagement", "Participatory Implementation"):** The use of cultural symbols (Gandhi for SBA) and grassroots institutions (ASHA workers, Panchayats) to ensure community ownership.
- **Transparency & Accountability ("Challenges"):** The need for clear accountability mechanisms to prevent initiatives from becoming merely symbolic.

Strong Relevance: GS Paper III (Environment, Disaster Management, Security)

This is a core environment and disaster management topic.

1. Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation:

- **How to use:** This is a forward-looking framework for environmental policy.
 - **Mainstreaming Health:** The core argument is that **climate and environmental policies must be framed and evaluated through a health lens**. Instead of just talking about "reducing emissions," talk about "preventing

respiratory diseases" (via Ujjwala) or "reducing water-borne diseases" (via Swachh Bharat). This makes abstract concepts relatable.

- **Climate Adaptation:** The work under MGNREGA (restoring ecosystems) is a prime example of **community-led adaptation** that builds resilience against climate shocks like droughts and floods.

2. Disaster and Disaster Management:

- **How to use:** A health-centric climate policy is a form of **disaster risk reduction**.
 - Improving sanitation and nutrition (through SBA and PM POSHAN) builds a healthier population that is more resilient to health disasters triggered by climate events (e.g., heatwaves, cholera outbreaks after floods).

Relevance: GS Paper I (Society) and GS Paper IV (Ethics)

GS Paper I: Salient features of Indian Society

- **How to use:** The schemes mentioned have profoundly impacted Indian society by improving public health, reducing drudgery for women (Ujjwala), and creating assets (MGNREGA).

GS Paper IV: Ethics and Human Interface

- **How to use:** The integration of climate and health raises ethical questions of **intergenerational justice** (our duty to leave a healthy planet for future

generations) and **social justice** (as the poor are most vulnerable to climate-health risks).

4. "Shifting sands"

1. Core Event

- **What:** Signing of a mutual defence agreement between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.
- **Key Clause:** "Any aggression ... shall be considered an aggression against both."

2. Historical Context of the Saudi-Pakistan Relationship

- **Nature:** A long-standing "special relationship."
- **Pakistan's Role:** Has trained Saudi forces for decades.
- **Saudi Arabia's Role:** Provided generous financial assistance, including for Pakistan's nuclear program.
- **New Development:** This relationship has now been "institutionalised" through the formal agreement.

3. Geopolitical Catalysts for the Agreement

- **US Disengagement:** The traditional US security guarantee for Gulf monarchies is now in question (e.g., no US response to the 2019 attack on Saudi oil facilities by Iranian allies).
- **Regional Instability:** The agreement was announced a week after Israel bombed Iran, highlighting the shifting security landscape.
- **Stalled Abraham Accords:** The process of normalizing Arab-Israeli relations against Iran was

derailed by the Hamas attack (October 2022) and the subsequent Gaza war.

4. Strategic Motivations

- **For Saudi Arabia:** To diversify its security alliances and send a clear signal to Washington and Tel Aviv that it is exploring options beyond the US and Israel.
- **For Pakistan:** To secure much-needed financial assistance and present itself as a security provider to Gulf monarchies concerned by "Israel's unchecked militarism."

5. Ambiguities and Risks

- **Scope Unclear:** It is not specified if the agreement extends Pakistan's nuclear umbrella to Saudi Arabia or guarantees an immediate Saudi response to an attack on Pakistan.
- **Risk of Entrapment:**
 - Pakistan could be dragged into West Asia's "polycrisis."
 - Saudi Arabia could be pulled into tensions in South and Central Asia.

6. Implications and Advice for India

- **Challenge:** The agreement could complicate India's manoeuvres in West Asia.
- **Context:** India's recent "pro-Israel tilt" seems to be coinciding with Arab monarchies "hedging their bets," potentially overlooking India's concerns.
- **Recommended Strategy:** India must prepare for rapid changes and avoid the mistake of doubling down on its tilt towards an "elevated, dangerous Israel."

- **Long-term Goal:** India's focus should be on promoting regional stability and maintaining a strategic balance among all pillars of its West Asia policy.

How to use

Primary Relevance: GS Paper II (International Relations)

This is the core area. The topic falls under "Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests" and "India and its neighbourhood."

1. India and its Neighborhood:

- **How to use:** This pact directly alters the strategic calculus in India's extended neighborhood.
 - **Pakistan's Enhanced Profile:** The agreement provides Pakistan with a strategic depth it was losing due to its economic crisis and FATF grey-listing. It gains a powerful patron and a role as a "security provider," which could embolden its posture towards India.
 - **Nuclear Umbrella Ambiguity:** While unclear, the possibility of Pakistan extending its nuclear umbrella to Saudi Arabia creates a complex and dangerous dynamic that India must monitor closely.

2. West Asia / Gulf Region:

- **How to use:** This is a pivotal moment for India's "West Asia Policy," which is built on maintaining a delicate balance between competing powers (Israel, Iran, Arab Gulf states).
 - **The End of US Hegemony:** The pact is a

direct consequence of perceived US disengagement from the region. This forces regional powers to form new alliances for security, making the landscape more multipolar and unpredictable.

- **Complication for India:** India's recent closeness to Israel (the "pro-Israel tilt") now coincides with Gulf monarchies (like Saudi Arabia) hedging their bets *against* Israel's "unchecked militarism." This forces India to recalibrate its approach to avoid alienating crucial Gulf partners.
- **Energy and Diaspora:** The Gulf is vital for India's energy security and hosts a large Indian diaspora. Any regional instability or shift in alliances directly impacts these core interests.

5. The Saudi-Pakistan Pact is a Dodgy Insurance Policy

Context

- **Event:** Signing of the **Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA)** in Riyadh, September 17, 2025.
- **Leaders Present:** Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman & Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif (with Field Marshal Asim Munir).
- **Nature:** Agreement seen as an **insurance policy** based on past cooperation, but with deep mutual distrust.

Historical Background (Highs & Lows)

- **1951 onwards:** Bilateral defence links established.
- **1979–89:** Pakistani military contingent (20,000 troops) deployed in Saudi Arabia to protect holy sites and Al-Saud family.
- **1990s onwards:**
 - Pakistani troops sent during Gulf War, Yemen civil war, etc.
 - Saudi reliance: Pakistan as military insurance.
 - Pakistan often reluctant (e.g., declined 2015 Saudi request in Yemen war).
- **Pattern:** Pakistan treated as "Praetorian Guard," but with frequent withdrawal due to domestic/strategic compulsions.

US Role

- Historically, **Pentagon underpinned Saudi-Pak defence alliance.**
- U.S. offered "over-the-horizon" military cover.
- Recent events:
 - Trump hosted Saudi Crown Prince & Israeli PM together (2020) → hinting trilateral realignment.
 - U.S. influence remains critical for Saudi defence strategy.

Nature of the SMDA

- Pact essentially gives Saudi Arabia **Pakistani military insurance**.
- But **limitations**:
 - Pakistan unlikely to intervene against Israel or Iran directly.
 - Seen more as **political symbolism** than credible deterrence.
- **Conditionality**: Saudis expect advanced U.S. defence technology and support in exchange for signing the deal.

Strategic Weaknesses

1. Lack of Credibility:

- Pakistan's mixed record of troop deployments.
- Past withdrawals (e.g., Iraq 1990, Yemen 2015).

2. Mismatch of Interests:

- Saudi concerns: security from Iran, Israel, and internal dissent.
- Pakistan's interests: economic aid, energy supplies, diaspora remittances.

3. Dependence on U.S.:

- Any Saudi-Pak defence pact requires American support, especially for **weapons technology and intelligence**.

4. Domestic Constraints in Pakistan:

- Economic crisis, political instability.
- Military overstretch, credibility loss after Afghanistan exit.

Implications for the Region

• For Saudi Arabia:

- Seeks broader defence assurances, balancing Iran & Israel.
- SMDA is a fallback option, not first choice.

• For Pakistan:

- Gains financial aid, oil support, and diplomatic cover.
- Risks being dragged into conflicts it cannot sustain.

• For the U.S.:

- Remains the ultimate guarantor of Saudi security.
- Pact unlikely to replace U.S. defence umbrella.

What it Means for India

1. Energy Security:

- India = world's 3rd-largest oil importer, major customer of Saudi oil.
- Stability in Saudi defence arrangements matters for India's energy needs.

2. Geopolitical Balance:

- India-Saudi ties have deepened since 2000s (energy, defence, diaspora).
- Pact could tilt Saudi tilt slightly toward Pakistan, but **India remains vital partner** due to economic scale.

3. Opportunity for India:

- Showcase as **reliable, non-interventionist partner**.
- Expand cooperation in **energy transition, tech, defence industry**.

Conclusion

- The **SMDA is more symbolic than strategic**.
- Saudi Arabia seeks multiple “insurance policies” (U.S., Pakistan, Israel diplomacy).
- For India:
 - Limited immediate risk,
 - But long-term opportunity to **cement itself as Saudi Arabia’s most dependable partner** in energy, economy, and security cooperation.

-use same as last article